

How to Study Scripture

All right, let's begin by looking at the first little outline there. And it would probably be best if you would just pull it right out of your notebook and set it on top so you can take notes right on it, on how to study the Scripture. Now we're assuming that you are a Christian and that you know the Lord Jesus Christ and you have received Him as your Savior by faith. You've opened your heart and invited Christ to come in, take over your life, to rule your life, to be the Lord of your life. You've confessed your sin, you've acknowledged that on your own you can't make it and you've received the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, after that what do you do? This is kind of like the hut one hut two of boot camp; this is the first few steps of learning the march.

Just some practical things, and the first one is how to study the Bible. It is very obvious, I think, to every Christian, that the Bible is the revelation of God, that God has written His Word for us. It is the only rule we have for life. It is the only standard we have for behavior. It is the only authority. There may be other things that you learn in life that help you through life, but they don't have the authority that this does. When the Bible speaks, that is the voice of God. And it is authoritative and it becomes, then, for us, the standard of life.

Now, if that's the case then it is very important for us to learn what the Bible says. To be able, systematically, to approach the Scripture and find out what it says. Not only what it says but what it means by what it says. There are a lot of people who read what it says but they don't know what it means by what it says. So it is basically important in the Christian life to acknowledge that the Bible is the authority. There is no other authority equal to the Bible.

There are some Christians who read all kinds of books rather than the Bible. And we say they study about the Bible but they don't study the Bible. The primary thing to do is to study the Word of God. Through it God speaks. Now there are other good books that other men speak through with emphasis on Scripture and application and interpretation but there is no substitute for the Bible. So in the life of every Christian there must be that daily nourishing in the Word of God. It is critical.

Now, first of all, you'll notice in your outline that there is a thought there regarding the necessity of Bible study, that it is necessary. We want to spend just

a minute on that. We've given you some reasons why it is necessary. First of all, it is necessary to study the Bible in order to grow. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow by it." Throughout the New Testament Christians are spoken of as having been born again. You become a child of God. Repeatedly, you're called a child of God. Repeatedly you are called a child or a son of God.

You have been born into the family of God; you have been adopted as a son of God. You sometimes are even called babes. Now that implies that there is the capacity of life and growth within a new Christian, and that, of course, is obvious. We are to be growing. And here he says, Peter does, in 1 Peter 2, that "We are to grow by the pure milk of the word like babies grow." Like babies grow. If you don't feed a baby the baby dies, obviously.

You take a baby out of a hospital, like some people do and they want to get rid of it, and every once in a while you read about finding a dead baby in a trash can. And what happens is you don't feed the baby; it dies; it's obvious. And the same thing is true with a Christian. We are babies; we are to grow, and in order to grow the Word must be taken in because the Word is our milk that brings us growth.

The Word is our food. The Word is our sustenance. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 3 in verse 3, we read in regard to the same thing. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for this time you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able."

Now, just pulling one thought out of here. The apostle Paul says, "I feed you." Wish I could feed you meat, but I can't, so I have to feed you milk. But nevertheless I feed you. This just shows us that Paul understood the priority of feeding, and we know what he used to feed them. He used the Scripture. Sometimes the Scripture can be milk, and sometimes it can be meat. Now that doesn't mean that some parts of the Bible are milk and some parts are meat. Really all of it is either milk or meat. It depends on how deep you go.

For example I can say to you, "God so loved the world," and if you are a brand new Christian you say, "Yeah, I understand that." That's kind of milk. But then if I took off and began to develop the character of God, the character of His love, how His love works, what His love is defined at in the Scripture, the depths of all that that concept means, then that gets deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and gets into the meat aspect of that same simple truth. We say, for example, "God knows

everything,” and that's a milk statement. But we could develop that to the place where it becomes very complex, and that would be the meat end of it.

So the apostle Paul recognized the need to feed - sometimes milk, sometimes meat, depending upon the situation involved. Depending upon the aptitude and the receptivity of the people. In Colossians chapter 2 it says in verse 6, “As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith.” And here, again, the idea that Christians are to grow, rooted, and built up. And the way that that happens is through the faith. That is through the content of Christianity.

The more we understand the Christianity, the more established we are, the more built up we are. In Jeremiah, an Old Testament passage, [Jeremiah 15:16](#), Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and the word became within me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” So Jeremiah consumed the Word of God, as it was food to him. In Acts chapter 20, in verse 32 where Paul is saying good-bye to the Ephesians elders, he says, “I commend you to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up.”

So the Word is necessary if we are to grow. And growth is basic to usefulness. Babies aren't really that useful. I mean they are nice to have around. They're kind of cuddly and you pet them a lot and kiss them and do that kind of stuff, but you can't really do much with them. You can't say, “All right, baby, go out and clean up the bedroom,” or whatever. You know, they are not really too helpful.

And there are a lot of Christians like that, they are just in the way. You know, you trip over them. They're always crawling around the floor messing with stuff, and they are really not a whole lot of use to anybody. And the longer they stay that way, the more tragic it becomes. And so we assume that you want to grow. We assume in Christian life that where there is life there is growth. And so we desire that Christians would grow. And the way to grow is from the Bible, and so we must study the Bible.

Second thing, and we'll move ahead. The second reason that it is necessary to study the Bible is to defeat sin. We will never be able to defeat sin unless we defeat it with the Word of God. In Ephesians chapter 6, what is the armor that is used to fight against Satan? What is the one weapon the Christian has? The sword of the Spirit, which is - What? - the Word of God. The thing that defeats Satan's temptation is the Word of God. There are a lot of scriptures that relate to that. It says in [Psalm 119:11](#), “Thy word have I hidden in mine heart that I might

not sin against Thee.” When a Christian takes the Bible in, it becomes a preventative to sin.

To give you an illustration just simply from my own life, the more scripture I learn, the more difficult it is for me to sin. You know, I used to be able to sin and just kind of enjoy it. I could enjoy a good sin, just live it up and have a great old time. Now, I can't even get into one without thinking of fifteen Bible verses. Now, I get just my foot into the deal and “Thou shalt not,” you know. Because I know the truth of God and it's in my mind, it comes to my mind. If you don't know the truth of God, the Holy Spirit has nothing to bring to your mind. And so the defeating of Satan, the sword of the Spirit is the knowledge of the Scripture, the knowledge of the principles of the Word of God that become your defense against temptation.

Listen. It says in verse 9 of Psalm 119, “Wherewithal or how shall a young man cleanse his way?” How do you clean your life up? People come to me from time to time, and they say, “I wish my life was clean; it's a mess. How do I clean it up?” “By taking heed according to Thy word.” You see the way to clean your life up is to learn the book so that it becomes the dominating factor in your mind. You're like a computer.

You know what they say about computers, GIGO - garbage in, garbage out. Whatever you put into your computer is what's going to come out in your life. And if you put into it the Word of God, that's what's going to come out - righteousness and godly and holiness. That kind of behavior results from the truth of God being planted within you.

It says in [1 John 2:14](#), “I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong. The word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” The only way to overcome the wicked one is to have the Word of God abiding in you. And there are other scriptures listed there that cover basically the same thing.

Okay, C. It is necessary, thirdly, to study Scripture in order to prepare yourself for service, in order to prepare yourself for service. You'll find that when you get into the service of the Lord, the knowledge of the Word of God becomes your support so that when you get into a tough situation you have confidence in it. It becomes your information, so that when you get into a situation you know the principles to solve the situation; you know how to serve; you know the direction; you know how to operate to please God.

It's critical that if you are going to serve the Lord you know the Scripture; otherwise, you will go blindly into some activity thinking you are serving God while violating His principles. And you must know the principles. It's like a manual you know. If you come in and you've got a very complex job you're supposed to fill, and the guy says, "Well, have you had any experience?" "No, I never did it before." "Well, go in and take a whack at it." You are going to go in there and make an idiot out of yourself. You need to have some kind of instruction, some kind of training.

The Word of God prepares you for service. [Joshua 1:8](#) gives us insight into this, "The book of the law," God's Word, "shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." That's a good way to go to sleep you know. Go to sleep reciting Bible verses; go to sleep reciting the Word of God because it tends to hang in your mind. "Meditate day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Success in your life is dependent upon the occupation with the Word of God. This brings success. "Have not I commanded these," verse 9 says, "be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee wherever you go." Now here is a young man in this particular book who is going to go out and do a tremendous job. He's got a tremendous task. And the Lord says to him, "Look Joshua, if you'll meditate in my Word you can handle the job. It will give you the direction you need in your life. It'll show you how I operate. It'll give you comfort in times of discouragement. Stick into the Word and you are going to have good success."

So it's necessary to know the Word in order to be useful in Christian service. Also added to that would be 1 Timothy chapter 4, in verse 6: "If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine." What makes a good minister of Christ? And the word "minister," it means "servant."

What makes a good servant of Christ? Somebody who is "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine." When you know the Word of God you make a good servant of God. And you know, you see so many people who want to go around serving the Lord. But they don't know enough about the Bible to do it right, so they do it wrong, and then they get into problems.

All right, D in your outline. It is necessary to study the Scripture in order to be

blessed. I don't know about you, but I like to be happy rather than sad. I'd much rather be happy than miserable. And I know that life is made up of miserable times and happy times. But I also know this, that the more I study the Word of God, the happier I am no matter what the circumstances are. The Word of God makes me happy. That's really practical.

When you see miserable people, the first question to ask him is "Have you studied the Bible today?" Simple question. You say, "Where does it say that?" Verse 1 of Psalm 1, "Happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night." That's a happy man. A happy man is somebody who studies the Bible. That's a happy man.

I've talked to a lot of people who have said, "I just kind of floundered around and, man, all of a sudden I started studying the Bible. My whole life has changed," et cetera, et cetera. "I have great happiness in my life." And that's exactly right. That's exactly what Psalm 1 says. [Joshua 1:8-9](#), I read you earlier, said the same thing. You will be happy if you meditate day and night in the Word of God.

All right, E then. It is necessary also to study Scripture to help others. You really can't help anybody else unless you know something. God never put a premium on ignorance. Your ignorance not only makes you unable to help yourself, but it makes you unable to help anybody else. And Christianity is all about helping other people, isn't it? How best can you help a person in trouble? By showing them God's solution to their trouble, right. How best can you solve a person's problem - by knowing what the Bible says about their problem, and how to handle it.

So you help others when you know the Word of God. For example, [2 Timothy 2:2](#) says, "That we are to teach faithful men in order that they may teach others also." The only way we can teach other people the principles, the only way we can help other people is to learn the principles ourselves. In [1 Peter 3:15](#) also, I think you have that one down on your list. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you the reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." You need to know some answers.

You can't help anybody if you don't know any answers. I had a fellow come to me the other night that I've been discipling, and he said he got into a situation and he just - this guy was asking him questions and he couldn't think of the answers. And then when he thought of the answers he couldn't think of the verses to support them, so the guy thought he was just giving his opinion. And so he said, "That did

more to convict me of my lack of Bible study than anything that had ever happened to me.” So he went right back in, got his Bible and he started studying the Bible like mad because he realized that he couldn’t help the guy.

Now those are some of the basics. Roman numeral two in your outline, “How is it done?” And if you have any questions as we go, write them down, and we’ll talk about them in just a minute. How is it done? How do we study the Bible? Well, first of all there has to be some preparation. If you're going to read the Bible, study the Bible, there are some basic things you have to do to prepare. Again, we would look at 1 Peter 2 verse 1. Verse 2 says we are to study the Word to grow. Verse 1 says, “Laying aside all evil,” “all evil,” and “all guile,” that’s deceit; “all hypocrisies,” or phoniness; “all envy and all evil speaking,” that’s talking about somebody behind their back. “Put all that aside, then desire the milk.”

Now what does that tell us? Before you can ever study the Bible with any effect, you gotta get rid of what? Sin. You gotta deal with it. So before you approach the Scripture, what’s a good way to start? With confession, a time of prayer. When you lay those things before the Lord and you confess your sin to the Lord, you purify your mind before God and you become a willing and capable pupil of the Word of God. As long as your mind and heart and life is cluttered up with sin, you're never going to be able to grow. So preparation involves purification, and that is a good place to start.

In [James 1:21](#), “Put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your lives.” Now there is a general principle there. Sin being set aside, you become able to receive the Word of God, and so this is important. So that’s the preparation. Before you study each day you spend a little time in prayer and confession. And you just acknowledge to the Lord whatever the sin might be and set it right, and then you go into the Word of God.

All right. Now, B. How do you actually study? First of all, it’s important that you read. If you don’t know how to read, you need to get the New Testament on tape. But if you know how to read, you read. And, you know, you have to believe that just reading the Bible is an exciting thing because God promises to bless somebody who reads the Bible. I have had people say this to me in different schools and say, “Well, ah, some parts of the Bible, you know, I don’t understand.”

One guy said to me, “I always avoid the Book of Revelation; I never read that because that’s just too weird. I don’t understand it.” So I quoted him [Revelation](#)

[1:3](#), “Happy is he that reads and they that here the words of this prophecy.” You want to be happy? Read Revelation. That’s a happy thing to read Revelation. You say, “Happy? Who could be happy reading about all that horrible?” You got to read all the way to the end, then you get happy. You get happy that you weren’t in the other part. Revelation can be a very happy experience. John says, “When I tasted all of this it was sweetness in my mouth even though it was bitterness in my stomach.”

And so we are blessed, we are happy if we read, so it is important to read. When Paul was giving instruction to Timothy about how to preach, he says, “First of all, read the Bible. Read it.” We need to do that, set aside a time every day to read the Bible. Now I’ll tell you how to do it, and I suggested this in the little book *God’s Will Is Not Lost*. This is a plan that really helped me. I used to struggle with the reading of the Bible. I’d read it, and I’d forget what I read the day before. Every time. And I’d read through a book and I’d get done, and wouldn’t know anything about the book. And then I’d read another book, and then I didn’t know anything about that one either.

And I was just piling up tremendous ignorance and spending a lot of time doing it. You know I was working real hard to be stupid, and I couldn’t retain anything. And so I thought, “This isn’t the way to go.” And then I picked up a little book on *How to Master the English Bible* by James M. Gray, and I heard a speech by a particular guy who was telling how he studied the Bible. And I just started putting some pieces together, and I decided that the way I learn is by repetition. And I found that that’s what Isaiah said when he said, “We learn line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.”

So I realized the only way to learn was repetition. Every time I had a test in seminary, I didn’t just read it over once and leave it. I had to go over it and over it and over it. You know how you study for a test. You know how you should study for a test. By repetition. And you work out little formulas to remember things, and you got all these little keys and signals in your brain and everything because you have to remember things, and repetition helps you remember. Well, I realized that and so I began to think, “Well, probably the best way to read the Bible is to read it repetitiously.” So I decided to start with 1 John and that’s what I would do.

Now, I’ll tell you how it works. You start with 1 John; it’s a good place for you to start. First John is not an easy book. It’s a simple book in many ways, but it has some great complexities, and you’ll find the more you read it the more meat you will begin to be able to receive. But you take 1 John, you sit down you read it

straight through at one sitting. Now it'll only take you about twenty, twenty-five minutes because it's five chapters, and it's not that tough. You just sit down and read it through. Maybe you need to pick the translation you like. I would suggest to you the New American Standard or the King James or the New International Version would be the three best.

But anyway, you read it through. That's it. Just read it through, close your Bible, have a little time with the Lord and then leave. And later on in the day you might want to do it again, but just once a day. Now the second day do the same thing, third day, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, seventh day, you do the same thing. Do the same thing for thirty days. Every day for thirty days you've read through 1 John one time. At the end of those thirty days you will know what's in 1 John.

Somebody will say to you, "Where does it say 'if we confess our sins'?" You say, "1 John 1, right-hand column, half way down, right about here. You know, that will be in your mind. You know if I were to say to you right now, "Quote me [Romans 12:1](#)," what's the first thing you see in your mind? You see a page, you see a column, and you see a chapter heading, right? Because your mind creates a picture. You can't learn without a mental picture.

And so what's hard about Bible memory is that all the pages look alike. That's why I draw in my Bible a lot. Because then every page has its own little quirks, and I see that page in my mind, and I remember it. People ask me how I remember Scripture. That's one way. I have little squiggles in different places in the Bible, little sweat marks or tears or rips or something, and I remember those, see. Whatever works, right? And so at the end of thirty days you know what's in 1 John.

Somebody says, "Where does it say 'love not the world, neither the things that are in it'?" "[First John 2:15](#), right-hand page, right-hand column, halfway down, right over--." You begin to know what's in 1 John. Now, you haven't defined everything, you haven't studied everything out, but at least you know what the book is about. Now about the tenth day you are going to feel like you got it all licked. "I don't need to keep doing this I know this thing." But you keep doing it and keep doing it, and the thirtieth day you'll realize that you really don't know much at all because the more you read it the deeper it becomes. I remember when I did this, I went through ninety days, because I began to get excited about 1 John.

Now, you finish 1 John, then you go to the gospel of John. Now, you say, "Well, wait a minute, John, that's twenty-one chapters. I don't have time." Well, that's good. You just divide it into three sections of seven chapters, and you read seven

chapters every day for thirty days, and then the second seven chapters from chapter 8-14, then chapter 15-21, see. So the first thirty days you're reading 1-7 over and over and over. The second thirty days you're reading 8-14; the third, 15-21. At the end of ninety days, you've knocked out the gospel of John.

If somebody asks you, "Where's the woman at the well?" you know where the woman at the well is. That's in chapter 4. If somebody asks you Nicodemus, that's chapter 3. Somebody asks you about the Bread of Life, that's chapter 6. Somebody asks you about the Shepherd, that's chapter 10. If they ask you about the "I am the vine," that's 15. The intercessory prayer is 17. The capture in the garden is 18; 21 is the restoration of Peter. Chapter 20 is the resurrection, and so forth and so forth, and so forth. I'm no scholar, you know. I read it ninety times. What do you expect?

But I mean that's the point. At the end of two and a-half years you've knocked off the whole New Testament. In two and a-half years, you'll be the only one on your block to do it, believe me. Two and a half years.

Well, you're going to study the Bible the rest of your life any way. You might as well do it so you learn it. And then the thing that's going to happen is you are going to be able to cross-reference. You'll be going through, "Oh yeah, that's over there in Philippians 2. Oh, I know, that's over there." And pretty soon you'll be, you'll cease to be a concordance cripple.

Somebody says, "Well, I don't know where it is but I'll look up the word in the back here, see," and you can't ever find any thing. Pretty soon, by repetition, you'll begin to know where things are, and then you will be able to go to those things.

And then when somebody wants an answer to a question, you have that answer. So just imagine if you had started two and a half years ago. Isn't that an exciting thought? Yeah, it's a depressing thought. I'll buy that.

And let me suggest to you, as I said earlier, that if you want the best translations of the Scripture, it would be New American Standard, the New International Version, or the King James. King James though is not the most up to date one. It's true to the original text, and in most all cases it's a beautiful edition. I think it has a dignity that some of the others lose.

Now, beyond reading, it is important that you study. You've read it, you've been reading it for two and a half years. And, really, if you didn't do anything but just read it and come to church and listen and come to Bible studies and listen, that's

fine; that's a great way to start. But once you've gotten it all read, you're going to find out that you already are pretty well able to interpret it because the Bible is interpreted best by itself. Some of you who come here know that this is how I do interpret the Scripture. If I want to explain a passage I'll go to another passage or several other passages to explain that passage.

So by just reading through the New Testament again and again and again, you'll begin to be able to do that. Now, when you get to the Old Testament don't do it that way just read it through once and go back and read it through again, and go back and read it through again through your life. Don't try to read it repetitiously. It's not that kind of thing that needs to be done that way. It's just history and narrative, and you can get it pretty well by just reading straight through it.

All right, so then once you've read it all, then you begin to study it. Now how do you study the Bible? For example, let me give you an idea. What about if you just decided I'm going to study all the prayers of the Bible. That would be a great study. It would take you a long time to do it. You start out in Genesis, find every time there was a prayer there and study about it. What did they say, who prayed, what was he praying for, what was the answer? Terrific! Then maybe you want to say, "I think I'll study all the prayers of the apostle Paul." What a tremendous study that would be. You can make any topic you want.

"I'd like to study the subject of forgiveness. So you could go to the bookstore, and you could buy a little book that's called a topical index, and you could look up the word "forgiveness," and it would tell you every passage in the Bible where forgiveness is discussed. And you could take that and look them all up, do a little study on that. And that would be exciting.

I would suggest - and I'll suggest some things in a minute - that you take some notes on some books that I suggest for you in a minute because they can really be a great help to you. You could say, for example, "I want to know about God's judgment so I'm going to go through, I'm going to go through the book of Isaiah and find everything I can find in there about judgment. And then I'll know something of why God judges and how He judges and what the response is."

Another great way to study the Bible is biographically. Take somebody like Elijah and do a study on Elijah. Or take somebody like David and study the life of David. That absolutely is fascinating. Or Joseph, or find somebody really kind of off-beat like Ahithophel, or something like that, somebody who is just kind of a little bit of a strange character. Or take a character that's not talked about too much in the

New Testament and try to dig a little bit and find out all that the New Testament says about him. Maybe somebody like Andrew who isn't quite as predominant as others.

Now, also in your study, read good books. Whatever your study is going to be on, find some good material on that, or get some tapes on that, and get some outside input. We have a library here to provide that, and you ought to find a good library wherever your area is. A good Christian library where you can check books out or where you can go and just sit and do some reading in reference books. There are good tapes available that supplement, and you ought to purchase good books.

Don't spend a lot of your money buying popular kind of Christian books. You know what I mean? The kind of Christian book you read once because it's the testimony of somebody, and that's it, you put it away. That's fine if you want to check it out of the library or maybe once in a while if somebody gives you one, or you really want to buy one once in a while, but build your library on the books that are going to become reference books that you will use again and again and again.

For example it's good to have a concordance. Not the one in the back of your Bible, but one that has much more information than that, because that one is very limited. There's three major ones. They're easy to remember - Strong, Young, and Cruden's. Strong for the strong, Young for the young, and Cruden's for the crudes. I have Cruden's myself. Well, I also have Strong. But get a good concordance where you can look up words. That's very important.

And then it's important also to have a topical index. There are many of them. Well, there was a paperback one that I used by R.A. Torrey that was given away by Billy Graham organization sometime back. There is *Monser's Topical Index*; there is *Nave's Topical Bible*. There's all types of topical index books, and all that means is you can go to that book and it will tell you every scripture on any subject you want so you can study it, find out all there is about it. Really a helpful thing to have.

One other thing that I would suggest is that you have a commentary. A commentary is a book that explains the meaning of the Bible. There are many good ones. I'll suggest probably the simplest one for a new Christian to use would be Wycliffe - *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. One volume - you can look up any passage in the Bible, and it gives you a basic explanation of what it means. Very, very helpful. Okay, in studying the Bible then, you want to study subjects, you want to study outside books so that you're studying in the Bible, and you're

studying those who have commented on the Scripture as well.

All right, one other thing in studying the Bible, very, very important. While you're studying, find somebody else that you can share your information with. Find somebody else that you can share your information with. If you are a parent it may be one of your kids; it may be your spouse. If you don't have a family situation, it may be another Christian, it may be another person you've lead to Christ. I don't know. But find somebody that you can share your information with; otherwise you're not nearly as motivated to learn.

People say to me, "Well how can you possibly study as much as you do?" And I say, "Well, I mean, I come out here every Sunday, and there's three thousand people sitting there saying, "Say something MacArthur." What do you expect? I've got to say something. The greatest motive that I have to study the Scripture is the responsibility of the ministry. I have to be faithful to God to teach the people He's given me.

If you don't have anybody that you are teaching, then you really don't have any motive beyond yourself, and sometimes it's hard to drum that up. But if you've got some little bird in the nest that keeps opening its mouth and hollering for food then you are going to have to be responsible to give it something. You say, "But I'm a new Christian." Yeah, but there's a newer Christian than you, or maybe there's somebody who isn't even one yet, and you need to teach them.

So find somebody that you can share the information you're learning with. Maybe it's even somebody who knows more than you do. Believe me there are people who know less than I do about the totality of Scripture, who can minister to me because they have fresh insight, or they see new things that I have never seen, or they see new applications in their life. Find somebody that you can share it with.

One other thing in studying, and that is find a pattern that you can follow. Find a human pattern that you can follow - very important. Maybe somebody like me, if you know me well enough to be able to see the pattern in my life. It may be somebody like your teacher in a Bible study. It may be a very godly person that you know very well, another Christian brother or sister. It may be one of the other pastors at the church. It could be any number of people, but find a pattern that you can follow. And you ought to some how try to establish enough of a relationship with that individual to be able to speak with them and to concern yourself with the things in their life that would apply to you.

All right, one other area in terms of how it is to be done. Preparation, reading, studying; fourthly, teaching, or D - teaching. Now, what we mean by this is submit yourself to teaching, good Bible teaching. May I add that this is never a substitute for your own study. Don't ever think that because you came to church and heard the sermon on Sunday morning and Sunday night and you went to the Bible study on Friday that you don't need to study on your own. If that's the case, you know what you have just forfeited? All those things we gave you in point number one - in their fullest possible capacity.

You are being benefited by teaching, but you are most benefited when you are being taught, and when you are studying on your own. And you say, "Well, I haven't been a Christian long enough to study on my own." If you've been a Christian ten minutes that's long enough. Get at it; start. So you want to be sure you submit yourself to a teacher, be in a Bible class, be in a church service where somebody's teaching the Word of God.

I see so many new Christians whose only orientation to Christianity is they sort of follow around the Christian stars. You know, tonight we are having da, da, da, and his orchestra - wonderful, saved Christian something or other. And so they gravitate over there, and they hear Christian music. Or over here they are showing the latest Christian movie, and over here they have got the greatest Christian ex-convict, and over here is the - you know. And they just go. They're sort of like vagabonds; they just travel around to what's ever happening. Submit yourself to systematic teaching of the Word of God someplace. That's very, very important.

You know one of the things that we see so much in Christianity is when somebody gets saved, if they have anything that is marketable the Christianity community will suck them up and make a commodity out of them. I talked to a guy on his deathbed, who told me his life was destroyed as a Christian because he was a celebrity. He got saved; the Christian community marketed him as a saved celebrity, and he spent the rest of his Christian life going around telling how wonderful it was to be a saved celebrity and never learned a single thing about the Christian life.

Consequently, his whole life was defeated, and he had terrible, terrible guilt because of all the sin in his life. He was trying to get up and tell everybody what a wonderful thing it is to be a saved celebrity, and the truth of the matter was that he was eating his heart out because he wasn't growing. And that's a problem in Christianity.

I don't care if you are a celebrity. You still have to submit yourself to some teaching and some solid feeding by men who are gifted of God and given to the church to teach you - very important. All right, that covers what I wanted to say about how to study the Scripture, and it's a little bit more lengthy maybe than some of the others, but that's because it's so very important.

All right, that covers what I wanted to say about how to study the Scripture. And it's a little bit more lengthy, maybe, than some of the others, but that's because it's so very important.

Now I want to give you some time to ask questions. And we'll give you plenty of time. So, feel free. And just any question that you want to ask, come right up to the mic and just fire away.

QUESTIONER: I realize it will be a long answer, but I was wondering in which order you're supposed to read. You said 1 John and then the Gospel of John but...

JOHN: All right, that's a good question. I would suggest that there is no particular order, but that you alternate a short book with a long book. Like when you finish John, you can go back and read Philippians. When you finish Philippians, you could go back and read Romans. When you finish Romans, which is 16 chapters, go back and read 1 Timothy, which is 6 chapters. Then go back and read Mark which is 16. Then go back and read Colossians. You know? Alternate between a large book and a small book at your own discretion. And you may find the Holy Spirit drawing you to different books because there are different needs in your life at any given time. Okay?

QUESTIONER: You said the necessity to study, like a babe that would die if he didn't get fed. What do you mean by death? Would you clarify that?

JOHN: I simply said that a baby who doesn't eat dies. And a Christian who doesn't feed himself on the Word of God will find that in a metaphorical sense, he will die in the sense of usefulness; he will die in the sense of joy; he will die in the sense of blessedness. Obviously, he will not forfeit his salvation. That's another subject that we could cover, but we've covered it in other areas. Okay?

QUESTIONER: If a person professes to have accepted Christ, but shows no hunger for the Word, can we conclude anything about their salvation? And then also, is there anything we can do to make a person like this more hungry for the Word?

JOHN: I think that's a very important question, and it relates to two scriptural

passages. The first one is in [John 8:31](#). Some Jews came to Jesus and said, “We believe.”

And Jesus said to them, “If you continue in My Word, then you are My real disciples.”

One of the marks of a true Christian is a desire for the Word of God. Now, that desire may vary; there may be some new Christians who have a very minimal desire, and I think very often the fault of that can be in the church that they’re in, or in the Christian community that they’re in where there’s no emphasis on the Word, and they don’t really understand what that means.

It is true, I think, and Jesus point it out that if somebody does really believe, and their faith is really saving faith, and they’ve really come to Christ, they will continue in His Word. In other words, they will desire to know the Word. More than that, they will desire to obey the Word. But in certain cases, that will vary. Obviously, some have a greater tenacity for the Word than others. Now, it may be that, for some, that commitment comes along later. That real, total commitment comes along later. It may be that some are in an environment where there isn’t the peer pressure to get into the Word that there should be. And I think the only thing that we can do to encourage them is to do what we’re trying to do here, to point out the benefits and the blessings of doing this, and the consequences of not doing it. You become victimized.

So, continuing in the Word of God is definitely the mark of a Christian. And I am very suspect of someone who just has absolutely no interest in Scripture, because Jesus said, “If he’s a real disciple, he’ll continue in the Word.

QUESTIONER: Okay, part of it is along what she was asking about I was wondering, too, is that sometimes even though the desire is there to study is just in the area of discipline. Some people seem to – I mean maybe have been brought up a certain way that it’s very easy for them to discipline themselves to study, where other people really have a hard time with that, even though they want to, but it’s hard to be consistent.

JOHN: All right, I’ll answer that question two ways. One is, yes, it’s true that some people are more disciplined than others. Two, that’s no excuse because the Lord says we’re to study the Word.

You know, I’ve met some very undisciplined, scatter-brained people who study the Bible a lot. And I’ve met some other military types who don’t. So, I’m not sure you

always have to equate spiritual hunger for the Word with humanistic self-discipline.

Now, it may be easier for a very, very self-disciplined person to set a time and get into it. But the facts are maybe he doesn't get as much out of it as somebody who does it a little more scattered but has a greater intensity of heart. So, I really don't think you're dealing with an absolute in that sense. I think that when the Word of God tells us to study to show ourselves approved unto God, that's a general command to all of us. And that we can't say, "Well, I'm sorry, I've taken a psychological survey, and I'm undisciplined. So, that lets me off the hook."

And the second thing I would say, if God makes a command, he gives us the energy and the Holy Spirit to fulfill that if we're walking in the Spirit.

QUESTIONER: You mentioned under study about finding a godly person and a pattern in their life that you could follow. Could you explain a little bit more about what you mean about a pattern?

JOHN: Yes. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, conduct, and purity and everything." The greatest feature of leadership is example. And it is true that – and I see it so often, it is true that people mimic other people. We all do it. You know? I mean I know when I go to the South and spend two weeks in the South, I come out "talkin' like this." Have you ever noticed you do that? Or when I go to Mexico, and I'm there for two weeks, and I come home, and everybody I see I say, "Buenos dias." You know? And – because you are an imitator.

And the apostle Paul picked this up. And everywhere he went, he said, "Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ. We imitate. And it's not enough to have somebody like Christ as a pattern, because He's God. We need somebody who's human to follow. That's why Paul always went around saying, "Follow me, follow me, because I'm following Christ." You need some – some flesh that you can see the pattern of life. And it's very important that you find that kind of pattern. And that's why I say it's dangerous for Christians to just flit around and never have any godly people to whom they submit themselves so that they can watch the pattern of their lives. Does that answer it?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: John, about that people follower's thing, pretty soon a person's going to find out that that person they're following is human and they have sin in their life. It just seems to me that you ought to say something about that.

JOHN: Okay, and that's obvious that we all have sin in our life. The first thing that the guy should do is admit it like Paul who said, "I'm the chief of sinners."

QUESTIONER: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: So, let's get that straight at the beginning. Let's not wait till you find that out. But the second thing is it isn't so much the absence of sin that makes the example; it's how it's dealt with. See? It's not - you're not following the guy because he's perfect. You're following him because he knows how to handle his imperfection.

QUESTIONER: Well, I understand that, but I think, though, that there's a real danger in that, just becoming a person follower.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: And, "I'm like so-and-so, therefore I'm godly." You know what I mean?

JOHN: Yeah. Well, sure. And you'll find that in every good thing like that, Satan will want to push you to the limits, you know, so that you become a little rubber duck who quacks the same way everybody else quacks. But that isn't the point. Right? I understand what you're hitting at. We follow the person as long as following them is the equivalent of following Christ. And we have to keep that perspective.

It's as if you were following a - a transparent man through whom you could see Christ. When you stop seeing Christ, and the man ceases to be transparent, then he ceases to be what he should be to you.

QUESTIONER: I [crosstalk]

JOHN: I think it's the example - I think it's the man who's leading you - it's his responsibility to make sure he's transparent so that you see Christ. As soon as he becomes like Diotrephes, whom we'll study Sunday night, who loves to have the preeminence - interesting thing about that is, the concept of preeminence is only used one other time in the Scripture, and it's in relation to Christ. So, here was a man who was a leader in the church, who was usurping the place of Christ, and he

wanted the preeminence. When a man does that, then he ceases to be transparent. You can't see Christ anymore, and he ceases to be functioning as a true example.

But as long as the person continually points to the preeminence of Christ and keeps the focus there, I think that there's a validity in it.

QUESTIONER: Okay. I'd like you also to hit on basically what you're trying to do with the reading the Bible – reading 1 John for 30 days. You're trying to build a habit in our life of getting God's Word into us. And could you say a little bit about habits and how to build them?

JOHN: Good. Yeah. You know, habits are just doing things repetitiously. And that's exactly what it does. If you can ever get the habit begun, we are creatures of habit. You know, we basically do the same things all the time. We put on whichever pant leg goes on first always goes on first by the time you get to be 40 years old. And whichever sock goes on first, that's all – you know? – you're just creatures of habit. You have the same kind of routines that – the youngest of you don't at this point. You'll find out when you get old like us that everything – you know, if – “What's happened to my thing? Why is it over there? It's not here.” You know? And you get into these little deals.

But – and you can see this creeping up. So, we're creatures of habit. And the best thing to do is to start habits when you're young. Routine really helps.

And you can say, “Well, I just flow in the Spirit, man. I just kind of go and blow wherever.”

Well, you know, you can even trace habits in the life of Christ. You know, He spent most of the nights in communion with the Father. That was His time. He retreated to the Mount of Olives night after night after night after night after night in prayer with the Father. And that was His time when He was here on earth. And I think habits are very important. I don't think that the habit performed ritualistically or legalistically is a substitute for what really should be going on. But I think if you can get into a pattern, it helps.

QUESTIONER: Okay, just one more thing. Are you saying that this reading of Scripture and then studying the Scripture on your own for yourself is something apart from any sort of ministry you're doing? Is it something that you do yourself apart from studying for Sunday service?

JOHN: Not necessarily. I feel that if I've studied the Word of God, I've studied the

Word of God. If I go into the study at 9:00 in the morning and have prayer for a while, and then I study till 5:00 in the afternoon and go home, I don't say, "Oh, I'm defeated today; I didn't have my devotions." Not if I've spent six or seven hours studying the Bible. I – you know, people talk about having your devotions. I'm not sure what that means even, having your devotions. If it means reading without understanding, I'm not sure it's even valid. If it means going through a little formula or reading something like Our Daily Bread, that's fine. It's a little bit of input. But when you've spent time in the intensity of the study of the Word of God, that's what you're after. I don't think we need to label little segments and say, "Well, if you didn't do it in this context and read this kind of a thing with this thing in mind, it doesn't count."

QUESTIONER: But just for the ordinary Christian, because you're a little different, studying every single day, would you say that – suppose they were involved in a weekly biblical study, which they did a little study during the week for that, would you say that it would be important for them to do this reading of Scripture daily?

JOHN: Yeah, I think that you should set the pattern anyway, and then if you did additional things, they would be done additionally. Don't break your pattern on a normal basis. But I don't think that's a crucial thing. I think maybe there is a day when you will break your pattern because you have to work on your lesson. That's fine. I don't see a problem with that.

QUESTIONER: I'd like to ask you maybe if you could explain the details of what you did this week in order to study for I Corinthians, and also what you would recommend for a new Christian, how he should study the Scripture, how it would differ from the way you would study for a particular passage?

JOHN: Well, it probably would differ. The way I study is to take the – first of all, I would read the text in several versions, along with the Greek text handy there, until I understand it. Like I was working on [I Corinthians 4:14](#) to 21 this week. And so, I read it and read it and read it and read it and read it and just kept reading it. I just – again, repetitiously until [I Corinthians 14:21](#) is so much in my mind I could probably stand here and quote you the whole passage, and I haven't even tried to memorize it, but I'm saturating my mind with it. Now when I – when I do that, and do that and do that, then it begins to – begins to mean something to me. Then in the middle of that I see concepts. I see in that passage Paul making a very, very clear statement about he's the spiritual father of the Corinthians, and that that means this and this and this and this and this, and an outline develops.

Now, once that develops, I put that on paper. Then I go verse by verse through the passage, and I get commentaries, and I line up about 10 or 11 commentaries and I read everything everybody's ever written on that passage because I want to know the whole breadth of information about that verse. And so, I may read 12 commentaries on every verse in that whole section. And I take all kinds of notes on that, and then I throw all that together and out comes Sunday morning – good, bad, or indifferent.

But I feel, as I said earlier, that the way to study is, first of all, to go through the Scripture and get all you can get on the Scripture, and then supplement that scriptural understanding with any books that you have available.

And as I said, you can study a book, going through it to get the understanding of it; or you can study a topic like prayer, or judgment, or any of those things we mentioned. You can study a character, a biography, anything you want. And you can do it by just reading the verses, putting them together on a paper, and working through. You may want to study a chapter, and you might want to say, "What's the key thought of the chapter?" Write that down. "What are the other thoughts that build to the key thought?" Write all of those down. "What don't I understand?" Write that down. "What do I understand?" Write that down. "What are other subjects introduced in the chapter that I could also study?" Write all of those down. And you'll find that out of a chapter will come so much stuff you won't believe it. It's just – it's loaded with things. So, there are a lot of ways to approach it. Does that cover –

QUESTIONER: John, do you do like your word studies and your grammatical studies right out of the commentaries, or do you do it in some other way?

JOHN: That's really hard for me to answer personally, because I do it so many different ways. I sometimes – like today, I got this concept that came cross where there was a man named Gaius. I was working on 3 John. There's a man named Gaius, and Gaius is commended as a man who not only knows the truth, but walks in the truth. And I thought, "Now, that's an interesting commendation for a man." And I thought – I got to thinking about the idea of commending. So, I just took my – my Bible, and I started in the Pauline epistles with the first one – Romans – and I found every time that Paul ever commended anybody. And I went through every one of those passages. And he starts out in 16:1; he commends Phebe for being a servant and a fellow helper. And then down, down, and Mary and Urbanus and all this. I just went through every single book, and I put down everybody that was ever commended and why they were commended. So, that was one way to do the

study.

Other times – for example, I had that thesis on 3rd John, and I wanted to do some study into a Greek phrase. And so, I got out that particular thesis and studied through that to see what the Greek phrase meant. And I read B. F. Westcott in the Greek text and found out what he said it meant. And then I would do it from that angle.

Sometimes I'll do the study myself. I wanted to do a study on a particular word *hupolambanō*. So, I took out my own Greek text lexicon and what I call a – what is called The Englishman's Greek Concordance, and I did my own study on that. So, there's all different ways that you do it. But it gets kind of hairy with me, because I go all different directions, and there's no one way.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, John, what do you do when you just get up in the morning, and you go through a day, and you just don't feel like reading the Bible?

JOHN: Well, usually you don't read it. Right? Well, one of the things that I think is important is if you don't feel like reading the Bible, you have just recognized the truth that this is when you most need it. And if you can kind of get that into your mind, it may help.

Be aware of the fact that the times you don't want to read it are the times you most need it, and they're indications of the fact that maybe your approach to the Scripture isn't all that it ought to be.

You know, we are – let's face it, as rigid as we would like to set ourselves, we're sinners, and one of the ways we sin is in disobedience. And disobedience will take the form of a failure to do a lot of things, and that's one of them. And we all fall there, even myself. Practically, from my viewpoint, the toughest time for me is my vacation, because I tend not have that constant pattern of study. And I tend to skip two-three days at a time without studying the Scripture. And - and of course, for me that's like not eating, because I'm so used to doing it. And it has a devastating effect on me. So, I really struggle, too, with that. I think all Christians do because of our human weakness. But I think if you recognize that when you feel that way, that's when you need it most, maybe that's a help.

QUESTIONER: John, with your children, 12-13 years old, would you recommend the New Testament or other books?

JOHN: There are several good translations for children. There's one called The

Children's Living New Testament that is designed around an 850-word vocabulary. Very simple. And I use that with my children every day. They can understand everything in there. It is the New Testament, but I also think the Old Testament is great for kids, too. The Living Bible would be the best Old Testament to use. Is that what you were getting at?

And there's another book that I use with my kids that's just great. It called Leading Little Ones to God by somebody named Schoonhoven or Schoonover or something. It's all systematic theology for a child, basic doctrine. Like today, we were studying - we've been studying the doctrine of salvation in relationship to sin and mercy and all of that. And today we were going over the concept that God is good and God is forgiving. And it told the whole story of Joseph, how that even though his brothers were evil and his brothers threw him in a pit and sold him into Egypt, God was good enough to put Joseph in a position in Egypt to give them the grain they needed to stay alive when the famine came. How God was merciful through the very one that they had sold. And it turns out to be a perfect picture of Christ, the very individual the world killed was redeeming them at the very moment they were killing Him.

So, a book like that is helpful. And there are many good aides that you can use with children. And in fact, they become very helpful. You notice I remembered the story very well. I'm very susceptible to simplicity I want you to know.

QUESTIONER: John, if you know someone who's a new Christian, and they're in a - they're far away from you, and they can't attend a church in your area, how do you - what advice do you give them on choosing a church and what to look for?

JOHN: Well, you know, there are several things. We have some tapes like "The Marks of an Effective Church," or other tapes on the Church and what would be the marks of a church that you'd want to go to. That's one way. But to send them the principles so that they know what they're looking for. But really, the only thing you can do is maybe send them some books or some other tapes so that they become built up in the faith somewhere and can make a proper judgment of a church. This is a very practical problem.

Somebody comes to Christ in another area; they don't know where to go to church. So, they go to some church because somebody takes them there, and the church is all goofed up. And so, they find that they lose out. You know? They don't really grow; they don't mature. So, it's important to pick a good church. And I think that one way to do it is to send them books or tapes that will strengthen them and help

them to grow to a position where they can make a proper evaluation. And I know a lot of people in our church do that. I get asked every Sunday to recommend a church in some city. I don't always know. So, I say, "Well, send the person some tapes and some books so that they can begin to study some basic things about what the church should be." In fact, this book is a good book to do that; it's just a simple, biblical picture of the church.

And once they've made that evaluation, then they'll know how to judge a church. And then the only thing they can do is just follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONER: Do you think there's a danger in overemphasizing relying on helps and concordances and so that - cutting down on the time after you've read and really allowed the Holy Spirit to just speak to you individually and really let you know, you know, what the verse means? I know in my life, that was my first time I got a hold of some helps and commentaries. I'd just, you know, read the verse and hit the commentaries. And -

JOHN: Well, in answer to that, I would say this: you really cannot know what the Holy Spirit is saying to you until you know what the Holy Spirit is saying. Because He's not saying anything different to you than He's saying there. You know what I mean by that? It doesn't say, "Oh, isn't this wonderful? What this says to me is..." Well, I'm not interested in what it says to you. I'm interested in what it says.

You know, we've got a lot of people going around saying, "The Bible means this to me." Well, you know, if you interpret the Bible that way, everybody's got their own thing. So, you can't just say, "Well, I want to read it, and whatever God says to me, that's good." You know, half the time you're at least going to be out of context or misinterpret the Scripture, and you've missed the whole point. So, I would say that - study the Scripture, read the Scripture, study the commentary, and then sit down and meditate after you already know what it means and go at it that way. But don't miss the meditation. Because it says - and we read it already in the Psalms and in Joshua - "Meditate on these things day and night." We don't meditate in our day and age, and that's an important part of Bible study.

I was reading some interesting things recently about the fact - I think it was Marshall McLuhan was saying that we live in a world that is so oriented around something happening all the time and conversation going on or music that no one ever thinks. He said in the article, "The best way to avoid God is number one, never be alone, and number two, always have the music on." He even went so far as to say, "There's nothing to talk about anymore in our world."

There's nothing to say. The media has said everything. There aren't any opinions that haven't been expressed a zillion times. There aren't any conversations that haven't been held. So, everybody sits around like a blank and stares at a box. There isn't anything to talk about. We have a whole world of media that Satan has used to so dominate our thinking - you see people going around with little things in their ear. They get in the car - bing - they'll turn on the deal. Get home, turn on the tube. Turn on the radio. It's got to be noise going on. See? The whole idea of meditation.

Then you have somebody coming in from the outside with his legs crossed and a silly suit on and his hair hanging down his back who says he's sitting in the corner and meditate. And that's the other extreme, where you sit there and think about nothing. But - and really, you know why that's popular today? It's popular as a social reaction to a world where your brain has been just bombarded, and people are sitting in a corner, trying to figure out who they are. But I think the Christian and the biblical approach is to meditate on the Word of God. Philippians 4 says, "Think on these things." You've got to sit there and think on these things. You've got to meditate on them. But you want to be sure your meditation is correct, that you're thinking on the proper thing. And you have to interpret it properly to do that.

And I'm not saying that just meditating on the Word is wrong, but if you're going to be thorough, then you ought to go at it that way.

QUESTIONER: Also, I had somebody not too - some time ago mention to me - a fairly new Christian - "Well, I haven't - I haven't read about that yet. I don't know about that particular kind" - you know? - in reference to - you know, a new Christian who's just got to the third chapter, and that particular subject isn't covered till the fifth chapter. And maybe that's used as a cop out I think, on people's part. Do you believe that that's not an excuse or that the Holy Spirit must really be ministering to that person and not allowing them - apart from their knowledge of Scripture, not allowing them to go into a sin or something like that?

JOHN: Yes. I do believe that. I believe that the Holy Spirit keeps us, and I believe that any sin at any point in your Christian life is a violation of what you know is right. I really - I do think, however, that there may be some things that aren't such moral things that we really just don't know about. For example, it may be some time that - I'll give you an illustration that a lawsuit would occur, and a Christian would sue another Christian simply because he didn't know what the Bible said about that. Well, there are some areas where there are - there are more of the

practical principles more than the ethical or moral things which I do believe we know. In fact, I believe even an unregenerate man knows those by conscience. But there may be some principles of behavior that God has laid down for the Christian.

For example, a Christian might not know to give what he has on the first day of the week unless somebody told him that. Because that – you know, he might – till he gets to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, he wouldn't really know that he was supposed to lay by in store the first day of the week as God has prospered him. He may feel he wants to give, but he wouldn't know the pattern.

Or unless somebody taught him about communion, he certainly wouldn't know to keep communion, because that's not a moral and ethical thing. That's a practice in the church. So, there are some things that, yes, a person would have to learn. But there are other things in the moral area that I believe God would teach through the Spirit.

A good illustration would be Romans 14 where he says, "There are some Jews who don't understand the liberty in Christ. So, wait till they grow up. Don't hassle them. If a man regards a day, let him regard it. If he wants to keep the Sabbath, it doesn't matter. He'll grow to the place where he understands his liberty." So, there's both side of it there.

QUESTIONER: While we're growing personally by repetitive reading, is it possible also to be teaching, say a family of small children, by reading aloud repetitively?

JOHN: It sure is.

QUESTIONER: I mean without a –

JOHN: Yes.

QUESTIONER: – without a previous –

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: - knowledge -

JOHN: I think if you wanted to do your reading thing with your family, that would be a great way to do it. Just read it together. And you'd all benefit from it. Sure.

Okay, I think at this time we'll – we'll stop session number one. That was good. I think it's profitable. And we covered some basic things I think will help some other

Christian - new Christians around the country on these tapes.

All right, let's begin by looking at the first little outline there. And it would probably be best if you would just pull it right out of your notebook and set it on top so you can take notes right on it, on how to study the Scripture. Now we're assuming that you are a Christian and that you know the Lord Jesus Christ and you have received Him as your Savior by faith. You've opened your heart and invited Christ to come in, take over your life, to rule your life, to be the Lord of your life. You've confessed your sin, you've acknowledged that on your own you can't make it and you've received the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, after that what do you do? This is kind of like the hut one hut two of boot camp; this is the first few steps of learning the march.

Just some practical things, and the first one is how to study the Bible. It is very obvious, I think, to every Christian, that the Bible is the revelation of God, that God has written His Word for us. It is the only rule we have for life. It is the only standard we have for behavior. It is the only authority. There may be other things that you learn in life that help you through life, but they don't have the authority that this does. When the Bible speaks, that is the voice of God. And it is authoritative and it becomes, then, for us, the standard of life.

Now, if that's the case then it is very important for us to learn what the Bible says. To be able, systematically, to approach the Scripture and find out what it says. Not only what it says but what it means by what it says. There are a lot of people who read what it says but they don't know what it means by what it says. So it is basically important in the Christian life to acknowledge that the Bible is the authority. There is no other authority equal to the Bible.

There are some Christians who read all kinds of books rather than the Bible. And we say they study about the Bible but they don't study the Bible. The primary thing to do is to study the Word of God. Through it God speaks. Now there are other good books that other men speak through with emphasis on Scripture and application and interpretation but there is no substitute for the Bible. So in the life of every Christian there must be that daily nourishing in the Word of God. It is critical.

Now, first of all, you'll notice in your outline that there is a thought there regarding the necessity of Bible study, that it is necessary. We want to spend just a minute on that. We've given you some reasons why it is necessary. First of all, it

is necessary to study the Bible in order to grow. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow by it." Throughout the New Testament Christians are spoken of as having been born again. You become a child of God. Repeatedly, you're called a child of God. Repeatedly you are called a child or a son of God.

You have been born into the family of God; you have been adopted as a son of God. You sometimes are even called babes. Now that implies that there is the capacity of life and growth within a new Christian, and that, of course, is obvious. We are to be growing. And here he says, Peter does, in 1 Peter 2, that "We are to grow by the pure milk of the word like babies grow." Like babies grow. If you don't feed a baby the baby dies, obviously.

You take a baby out of a hospital, like some people do and they want to get rid of it, and every once in a while you read about finding a dead baby in a trash can. And what happens is you don't feed the baby; it dies; it's obvious. And the same thing is true with a Christian. We are babies; we are to grow, and in order to grow the Word must be taken in because the Word is our milk that brings us growth.

The Word is our food. The Word is our sustenance. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 3 in verse 3, we read in regard to the same thing. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for this time you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able."

Now, just pulling one thought out of here. The apostle Paul says, "I feed you." Wish I could feed you meat, but I can't, so I have to feed you milk. But nevertheless I feed you. This just shows us that Paul understood the priority of feeding, and we know what he used to feed them. He used the Scripture. Sometimes the Scripture can be milk, and sometimes it can be meat. Now that doesn't mean that some parts of the Bible are milk and some parts are meat. Really all of it is either milk or meat. It depends on how deep you go.

For example I can say to you, "God so loved the world," and if you are a brand new Christian you say, "Yeah, I understand that." That's kind of milk. But then if I took off and began to develop the character of God, the character of His love, how His love works, what His love is defined at in the Scripture, the depths of all that that concept means, then that gets deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and gets into the meat aspect of that same simple truth. We say, for example, "God knows everything," and that's a milk statement. But we could develop that to the place

where it becomes very complex, and that would be the meat end of it.

So the apostle Paul recognized the need to feed - sometimes milk, sometimes meat, depending upon the situation involved. Depending upon the aptitude and the receptivity of the people. In Colossians chapter 2 it says in verse 6, "As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith." And here, again, the idea that Christians are to grow, rooted, and built up. And the way that that happens is through the faith. That is through the content of Christianity.

The more we understand the Christianity, the more established we are, the more built up we are. In Jeremiah, an Old Testament passage, [Jeremiah 15:16](#), Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and the word became within me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." So Jeremiah consumed the Word of God, as it was food to him. In Acts chapter 20, in verse 32 where Paul is saying good-bye to the Ephesians elders, he says, "I commend you to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up."

So the Word is necessary if we are to grow. And growth is basic to usefulness. Babies aren't really that useful. I mean they are nice to have around. They're kind of cuddly and you pet them a lot and kiss them and do that kind of stuff, but you can't really do much with them. You can't say, "All right, baby, go out and clean up the bedroom," or whatever. You know, they are not really too helpful.

And there are a lot of Christians like that, they are just in the way. You know, you trip over them. They're always crawling around the floor messing with stuff, and they are really not a whole lot of use to anybody. And the longer they stay that way, the more tragic it becomes. And so we assume that you want to grow. We assume in Christian life that where there is life there is growth. And so we desire that Christians would grow. And the way to grow is from the Bible, and so we must study the Bible.

Second thing, and we'll move ahead. The second reason that it is necessary to study the Bible is to defeat sin. We will never be able to defeat sin unless we defeat it with the Word of God. In Ephesians chapter 6, what is the armor that is used to fight against Satan? What is the one weapon the Christian has? The sword of the Spirit, which is - What? - the Word of God. The thing that defeats Satan's temptation is the Word of God. There are a lot of scriptures that relate to that. It says in [Psalm 119:11](#), "Thy word have I hidden in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee." When a Christian takes the Bible in, it becomes a

preventative to sin.

To give you an illustration just simply from my own life, the more scripture I learn, the more difficult it is for me to sin. You know, I used to be able to sin and just kind of enjoy it. I could enjoy a good sin, just live it up and have a great old time. Now, I can't even get into one without thinking of fifteen Bible verses. Now, I get just my foot into the deal and "Thou shalt not," you know. Because I know the truth of God and it's in my mind, it comes to my mind. If you don't know the truth of God, the Holy Spirit has nothing to bring to your mind. And so the defeating of Satan, the sword of the Spirit is the knowledge of the Scripture, the knowledge of the principles of the Word of God that become your defense against temptation.

Listen. It says in verse 9 of Psalm 119, "Wherewithal or how shall a young man cleanse his way?" How do you clean your life up? People come to me from time to time, and they say, "I wish my life was clean; it's a mess. How do I clean it up?" "By taking heed according to Thy word." You see the way to clean your life up is to learn the book so that it becomes the dominating factor in your mind. You're like a computer.

You know what they say about computers, GIGO - garbage in, garbage out. Whatever you put into your computer is what's going to come out in your life. And if you put into it the Word of God, that's what's going to come out - righteousness and godly and holiness. That kind of behavior results from the truth of God being planted within you.

It says in [1 John 2:14](#), "I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong. The word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." The only way to overcome the wicked one is to have the Word of God abiding in you. And there are other scriptures listed there that cover basically the same thing.

Okay, C. It is necessary, thirdly, to study Scripture in order to prepare yourself for service, in order to prepare yourself for service. You'll find that when you get into the service of the Lord, the knowledge of the Word of God becomes your support so that when you get into a tough situation you have confidence in it. It becomes your information, so that when you get into a situation you know the principles to solve the situation; you know how to serve; you know the direction; you know how to operate to please God.

It's critical that if you are going to serve the Lord you know the Scripture; otherwise, you will go blindly into some activity thinking you are serving God while violating His principles. And you must know the principles. It's like a manual you know. If you come in and you've got a very complex job you're supposed to fill, and the guy says, "Well, have you had any experience?" "No, I never did it before." "Well, go in and take a whack at it." You are going to go in there and make an idiot out of yourself. You need to have some kind of instruction, some kind of training.

The Word of God prepares you for service. [Joshua 1:8](#) gives us insight into this, "The book of the law," God's Word, "shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." That's a good way to go to sleep you know. Go to sleep reciting Bible verses; go to sleep reciting the Word of God because it tends to hang in your mind. "Meditate day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Success in your life is dependent upon the occupation with the Word of God. This brings success. "Have not I commanded these," verse 9 says, "be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee wherever you go." Now here is a young man in this particular book who is going to go out and do a tremendous job. He's got a tremendous task. And the Lord says to him, "Look Joshua, if you'll meditate in my Word you can handle the job. It will give you the direction you need in your life. It'll show you how I operate. It'll give you comfort in times of discouragement. Stick into the Word and you are going to have good success."

So it's necessary to know the Word in order to be useful in Christian service. Also added to that would be 1 Timothy chapter 4, in verse 6: "If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine." What makes a good minister of Christ? And the word "minister," it means "servant."

What makes a good servant of Christ? Somebody who is "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine." When you know the Word of God you make a good servant of God. And you know, you see so many people who want to go around serving the Lord. But they don't know enough about the Bible to do it right, so they do it wrong, and then they get into problems.

All right, D in your outline. It is necessary to study the Scripture in order to be

blessed. I don't know about you, but I like to be happy rather than sad. I'd much rather be happy than miserable. And I know that life is made up of miserable times and happy times. But I also know this, that the more I study the Word of God, the happier I am no matter what the circumstances are. The Word of God makes me happy. That's really practical.

When you see miserable people, the first question to ask him is "Have you studied the Bible today?" Simple question. You say, "Where does it say that?" Verse 1 of Psalm 1, "Happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night." That's a happy man. A happy man is somebody who studies the Bible. That's a happy man.

I've talked to a lot of people who have said, "I just kind of floundered around and, man, all of a sudden I started studying the Bible. My whole life has changed," et cetera, et cetera. "I have great happiness in my life." And that's exactly right. That's exactly what Psalm 1 says. [Joshua 1:8-9](#), I read you earlier, said the same thing. You will be happy if you meditate day and night in the Word of God.

All right, E then. It is necessary also to study Scripture to help others. You really can't help anybody else unless you know something. God never put a premium on ignorance. Your ignorance not only makes you unable to help yourself, but it makes you unable to help anybody else. And Christianity is all about helping other people, isn't it? How best can you help a person in trouble? By showing them God's solution to their trouble, right. How best can you solve a person's problem - by knowing what the Bible says about their problem, and how to handle it.

So you help others when you know the Word of God. For example, [2 Timothy 2:2](#) says, "That we are to teach faithful men in order that they may teach others also." The only way we can teach other people the principles, the only way we can help other people is to learn the principles ourselves. In [1 Peter 3:15](#) also, I think you have that one down on your list. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you the reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." You need to know some answers.

You can't help anybody if you don't know any answers. I had a fellow come to me the other night that I've been discipling, and he said he got into a situation and he just - this guy was asking him questions and he couldn't think of the answers. And then when he thought of the answers he couldn't think of the verses to support them, so the guy thought he was just giving his opinion. And so he said, "That did

more to convict me of my lack of Bible study than anything that had ever happened to me.” So he went right back in, got his Bible and he started studying the Bible like mad because he realized that he couldn’t help the guy.

Now those are some of the basics. Roman numeral two in your outline, “How is it done?” And if you have any questions as we go, write them down, and we’ll talk about them in just a minute. How is it done? How do we study the Bible? Well, first of all there has to be some preparation. If you’re going to read the Bible, study the Bible, there are some basic things you have to do to prepare. Again, we would look at 1 Peter 2 verse 1. Verse 2 says we are to study the Word to grow. Verse 1 says, “Laying aside all evil,” “all evil,” and “all guile,” that’s deceit; “all hypocrisies,” or phoniness; “all envy and all evil speaking,” that’s talking about somebody behind their back. “Put all that aside, then desire the milk.”

Now what does that tell us? Before you can ever study the Bible with any effect, you gotta get rid of what? Sin. You gotta deal with it. So before you approach the Scripture, what’s a good way to start? With confession, a time of prayer. When you lay those things before the Lord and you confess your sin to the Lord, you purify your mind before God and you become a willing and capable pupil of the Word of God. As long as your mind and heart and life is cluttered up with sin, you’re never going to be able to grow. So preparation involves purification, and that is a good place to start.

In [James 1:21](#), “Put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your lives.” Now there is a general principle there. Sin being set aside, you become able to receive the Word of God, and so this is important. So that’s the preparation. Before you study each day you spend a little time in prayer and confession. And you just acknowledge to the Lord whatever the sin might be and set it right, and then you go into the Word of God.

All right. Now, B. How do you actually study? First of all, it’s important that you read. If you don’t know how to read, you need to get the New Testament on tape. But if you know how to read, you read. And, you know, you have to believe that just reading the Bible is an exciting thing because God promises to bless somebody who reads the Bible. I have had people say this to me in different schools and say, “Well, ah, some parts of the Bible, you know, I don’t understand.”

One guy said to me, “I always avoid the Book of Revelation; I never read that because that’s just too weird. I don’t understand it.” So I quoted him [Revelation](#)

[1:3](#), “Happy is he that reads and they that here the words of this prophecy.” You want to be happy? Read Revelation. That’s a happy thing to read Revelation. You say, “Happy? Who could be happy reading about all that horrible?” You got to read all the way to the end, then you get happy. You get happy that you weren’t in the other part. Revelation can be a very happy experience. John says, “When I tasted all of this it was sweetness in my mouth even though it was bitterness in my stomach.”

And so we are blessed, we are happy if we read, so it is important to read. When Paul was giving instruction to Timothy about how to preach, he says, “First of all, read the Bible. Read it.” We need to do that, set aside a time every day to read the Bible. Now I’ll tell you how to do it, and I suggested this in the little book *God’s Will Is Not Lost*. This is a plan that really helped me. I used to struggle with the reading of the Bible. I’d read it, and I’d forget what I read the day before. Every time. And I’d read through a book and I’d get done, and wouldn’t know anything about the book. And then I’d read another book, and then I didn’t know anything about that one either.

And I was just piling up tremendous ignorance and spending a lot of time doing it. You know I was working real hard to be stupid, and I couldn’t retain anything. And so I thought, “This isn’t the way to go.” And then I picked up a little book on *How to Master the English Bible* by James M. Gray, and I heard a speech by a particular guy who was telling how he studied the Bible. And I just started putting some pieces together, and I decided that the way I learn is by repetition. And I found that that’s what Isaiah said when he said, “We learn line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.”

So I realized the only way to learn was repetition. Every time I had a test in seminary, I didn’t just read it over once and leave it. I had to go over it and over it and over it. You know how you study for a test. You know how you should study for a test. By repetition. And you work out little formulas to remember things, and you got all these little keys and signals in your brain and everything because you have to remember things, and repetition helps you remember. Well, I realized that and so I began to think, “Well, probably the best way to read the Bible is to read it repetitiously.” So I decided to start with 1 John and that’s what I would do.

Now, I’ll tell you how it works. You start with 1 John; it’s a good place for you to start. First John is not an easy book. It’s a simple book in many ways, but it has some great complexities, and you’ll find the more you read it the more meat you will begin to be able to receive. But you take 1 John, you sit down you read it

straight through at one sitting. Now it'll only take you about twenty, twenty-five minutes because it's five chapters, and it's not that tough. You just sit down and read it through. Maybe you need to pick the translation you like. I would suggest to you the New American Standard or the King James or the New International Version would be the three best.

But anyway, you read it through. That's it. Just read it through, close your Bible, have a little time with the Lord and then leave. And later on in the day you might want to do it again, but just once a day. Now the second day do the same thing, third day, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, seventh day, you do the same thing. Do the same thing for thirty days. Every day for thirty days you've read through 1 John one time. At the end of those thirty days you will know what's in 1 John.

Somebody will say to you, "Where does it say 'if we confess our sins'?" You say, "1 John 1, right-hand column, half way down, right about here. You know, that will be in your mind. You know if I were to say to you right now, "Quote me [Romans 12:1](#)," what's the first thing you see in your mind? You see a page, you see a column, and you see a chapter heading, right? Because your mind creates a picture. You can't learn without a mental picture.

And so what's hard about Bible memory is that all the pages look alike. That's why I draw in my Bible a lot. Because then every page has its own little quirks, and I see that page in my mind, and I remember it. People ask me how I remember Scripture. That's one way. I have little squiggles in different places in the Bible, little sweat marks or tears or rips or something, and I remember those, see. Whatever works, right? And so at the end of thirty days you know what's in 1 John.

Somebody says, "Where does it say 'love not the world, neither the things that are in it'?" "[First John 2:15](#), right-hand page, right-hand column, halfway down, right over--." You begin to know what's in 1 John. Now, you haven't defined everything, you haven't studied everything out, but at least you know what the book is about. Now about the tenth day you are going to feel like you got it all licked. "I don't need to keep doing this I know this thing." But you keep doing it and keep doing it, and the thirtieth day you'll realize that you really don't know much at all because the more you read it the deeper it becomes. I remember when I did this, I went through ninety days, because I began to get excited about 1 John.

Now, you finish 1 John, then you go to the gospel of John. Now, you say, "Well, wait a minute, John, that's twenty-one chapters. I don't have time." Well, that's good. You just divide it into three sections of seven chapters, and you read seven

chapters every day for thirty days, and then the second seven chapters from chapter 8-14, then chapter 15-21, see. So the first thirty days you're reading 1-7 over and over and over. The second thirty days you're reading 8-14; the third, 15-21. At the end of ninety days, you've knocked out the gospel of John.

If somebody asks you, "Where's the woman at the well?" you know where the woman at the well is. That's in chapter 4. If somebody asks you Nicodemus, that's chapter 3. Somebody asks you about the Bread of Life, that's chapter 6. Somebody asks you about the Shepherd, that's chapter 10. If they ask you about the "I am the vine," that's 15. The intercessory prayer is 17. The capture in the garden is 18; 21 is the restoration of Peter. Chapter 20 is the resurrection, and so forth and so forth, and so forth. I'm no scholar, you know. I read it ninety times. What do you expect?

But I mean that's the point. At the end of two and a-half years you've knocked off the whole New Testament. In two and a-half years, you'll be the only one on your block to do it, believe me. Two and a half years.

Well, you're going to study the Bible the rest of your life any way. You might as well do it so you learn it. And then the thing that's going to happen is you are going to be able to cross-reference. You'll be going through, "Oh yeah, that's over there in Philippians 2. Oh, I know, that's over there." And pretty soon you'll be, you'll cease to be a concordance cripple.

Somebody says, "Well, I don't know where it is but I'll look up the word in the back here, see," and you can't ever find any thing. Pretty soon, by repetition, you'll begin to know where things are, and then you will be able to go to those things.

And then when somebody wants an answer to a question, you have that answer. So just imagine if you had started two and a half years ago. Isn't that an exciting thought? Yeah, it's a depressing thought. I'll buy that.

And let me suggest to you, as I said earlier, that if you want the best translations of the Scripture, it would be New American Standard, the New International Version, or the King James. King James though is not the most up to date one. It's true to the original text, and in most all cases it's a beautiful edition. I think it has a dignity that some of the others lose.

Now, beyond reading, it is important that you study. You've read it, you've been reading it for two and a half years. And, really, if you didn't do anything but just read it and come to church and listen and come to Bible studies and listen, that's

fine; that's a great way to start. But once you've gotten it all read, you're going to find out that you already are pretty well able to interpret it because the Bible is interpreted best by itself. Some of you who come here know that this is how I do interpret the Scripture. If I want to explain a passage I'll go to another passage or several other passages to explain that passage.

So by just reading through the New Testament again and again and again, you'll begin to be able to do that. Now, when you get to the Old Testament don't do it that way just read it through once and go back and read it through again, and go back and read it through again through your life. Don't try to read it repetitiously. It's not that kind of thing that needs to be done that way. It's just history and narrative, and you can get it pretty well by just reading straight through it.

All right, so then once you've read it all, then you begin to study it. Now how do you study the Bible? For example, let me give you an idea. What about if you just decided I'm going to study all the prayers of the Bible. That would be a great study. It would take you a long time to do it. You start out in Genesis, find every time there was a prayer there and study about it. What did they say, who prayed, what was he praying for, what was the answer? Terrific! Then maybe you want to say, "I think I'll study all the prayers of the apostle Paul." What a tremendous study that would be. You can make any topic you want.

"I'd like to study the subject of forgiveness. So you could go to the bookstore, and you could buy a little book that's called a topical index, and you could look up the word "forgiveness," and it would tell you every passage in the Bible where forgiveness is discussed. And you could take that and look them all up, do a little study on that. And that would be exciting.

I would suggest - and I'll suggest some things in a minute - that you take some notes on some books that I suggest for you in a minute because they can really be a great help to you. You could say, for example, "I want to know about God's judgment so I'm going to go through, I'm going to go through the book of Isaiah and find everything I can find in there about judgment. And then I'll know something of why God judges and how He judges and what the response is."

Another great way to study the Bible is biographically. Take somebody like Elijah and do a study on Elijah. Or take somebody like David and study the life of David. That absolutely is fascinating. Or Joseph, or find somebody really kind of off-beat like Ahithophel, or something like that, somebody who is just kind of a little bit of a strange character. Or take a character that's not talked about too much in the

New Testament and try to dig a little bit and find out all that the New Testament says about him. Maybe somebody like Andrew who isn't quite as predominant as others.

Now, also in your study, read good books. Whatever your study is going to be on, find some good material on that, or get some tapes on that, and get some outside input. We have a library here to provide that, and you ought to find a good library wherever your area is. A good Christian library where you can check books out or where you can go and just sit and do some reading in reference books. There are good tapes available that supplement, and you ought to purchase good books.

Don't spend a lot of your money buying popular kind of Christian books. You know what I mean? The kind of Christian book you read once because it's the testimony of somebody, and that's it, you put it away. That's fine if you want to check it out of the library or maybe once in a while if somebody gives you one, or you really want to buy one once in a while, but build your library on the books that are going to become reference books that you will use again and again and again.

For example it's good to have a concordance. Not the one in the back of your Bible, but one that has much more information than that, because that one is very limited. There's three major ones. They're easy to remember - Strong, Young, and Cruden's. Strong for the strong, Young for the young, and Cruden's for the crudes. I have Cruden's myself. Well, I also have Strong. But get a good concordance where you can look up words. That's very important.

And then it's important also to have a topical index. There are many of them. Well, there was a paperback one that I used by R.A. Torrey that was given away by Billy Graham organization sometime back. There is *Monser's Topical Index*; there is *Nave's Topical Bible*. There's all types of topical index books, and all that means is you can go to that book and it will tell you every scripture on any subject you want so you can study it, find out all there is about it. Really a helpful thing to have.

One other thing that I would suggest is that you have a commentary. A commentary is a book that explains the meaning of the Bible. There are many good ones. I'll suggest probably the simplest one for a new Christian to use would be Wycliffe - *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. One volume - you can look up any passage in the Bible, and it gives you a basic explanation of what it means. Very, very helpful. Okay, in studying the Bible then, you want to study subjects, you want to study outside books so that you're studying in the Bible, and you're

studying those who have commented on the Scripture as well.

All right, one other thing in studying the Bible, very, very important. While you're studying, find somebody else that you can share your information with. Find somebody else that you can share your information with. If you are a parent it may be one of your kids; it may be your spouse. If you don't have a family situation, it may be another Christian, it may be another person you've lead to Christ. I don't know. But find somebody that you can share your information with; otherwise you're not nearly as motivated to learn.

People say to me, "Well how can you possibly study as much as you do?" And I say, "Well, I mean, I come out here every Sunday, and there's three thousand people sitting there saying, "Say something MacArthur." What do you expect? I've got to say something. The greatest motive that I have to study the Scripture is the responsibility of the ministry. I have to be faithful to God to teach the people He's given me.

If you don't have anybody that you are teaching, then you really don't have any motive beyond yourself, and sometimes it's hard to drum that up. But if you've got some little bird in the nest that keeps opening its mouth and hollering for food then you are going to have to be responsible to give it something. You say, "But I'm a new Christian." Yeah, but there's a newer Christian than you, or maybe there's somebody who isn't even one yet, and you need to teach them.

So find somebody that you can share the information you're learning with. Maybe it's even somebody who knows more than you do. Believe me there are people who know less than I do about the totality of Scripture, who can minister to me because they have fresh insight, or they see new things that I have never seen, or they see new applications in their life. Find somebody that you can share it with.

One other thing in studying, and that is find a pattern that you can follow. Find a human pattern that you can follow - very important. Maybe somebody like me, if you know me well enough to be able to see the pattern in my life. It may be somebody like your teacher in a Bible study. It may be a very godly person that you know very well, another Christian brother or sister. It may be one of the other pastors at the church. It could be any number of people, but find a pattern that you can follow. And you ought to some how try to establish enough of a relationship with that individual to be able to speak with them and to concern yourself with the things in their life that would apply to you.

All right, one other area in terms of how it is to be done. Preparation, reading, studying; fourthly, teaching, or D - teaching. Now, what we mean by this is submit yourself to teaching, good Bible teaching. May I add that this is never a substitute for your own study. Don't ever think that because you came to church and heard the sermon on Sunday morning and Sunday night and you went to the Bible study on Friday that you don't need to study on your own. If that's the case, you know what you have just forfeited? All those things we gave you in point number one - in their fullest possible capacity.

You are being benefited by teaching, but you are most benefited when you are being taught, and when you are studying on your own. And you say, "Well, I haven't been a Christian long enough to study on my own." If you've been a Christian ten minutes that's long enough. Get at it; start. So you want to be sure you submit yourself to a teacher, be in a Bible class, be in a church service where somebody's teaching the Word of God.

I see so many new Christians whose only orientation to Christianity is they sort of follow around the Christian stars. You know, tonight we are having da, da, da, and his orchestra - wonderful, saved Christian something or other. And so they gravitate over there, and they hear Christian music. Or over here they are showing the latest Christian movie, and over here they have got the greatest Christian ex-convict, and over here is the - you know. And they just go. They're sort of like vagabonds; they just travel around to what's ever happening. Submit yourself to systematic teaching of the Word of God someplace. That's very, very important.

You know one of the things that we see so much in Christianity is when somebody gets saved, if they have anything that is marketable the Christianity community will suck them up and make a commodity out of them. I talked to a guy on his deathbed, who told me his life was destroyed as a Christian because he was a celebrity. He got saved; the Christian community marketed him as a saved celebrity, and he spent the rest of his Christian life going around telling how wonderful it was to be a saved celebrity and never learned a single thing about the Christian life.

Consequently, his whole life was defeated, and he had terrible, terrible guilt because of all the sin in his life. He was trying to get up and tell everybody what a wonderful thing it is to be a saved celebrity, and the truth of the matter was that he was eating his heart out because he wasn't growing. And that's a problem in Christianity.

I don't care if you are a celebrity. You still have to submit yourself to some teaching and some solid feeding by men who are gifted of God and given to the church to teach you - very important. All right, that covers what I wanted to say about how to study the Scripture, and it's a little bit more lengthy maybe than some of the others, but that's because it's so very important.

All right, that covers what I wanted to say about how to study the Scripture. And it's a little bit more lengthy, maybe, than some of the others, but that's because it's so very important.

Now I want to give you some time to ask questions. And we'll give you plenty of time. So, feel free. And just any question that you want to ask, come right up to the mic and just fire away.

QUESTIONER: I realize it will be a long answer, but I was wondering in which order you're supposed to read. You said 1 John and then the Gospel of John but...

JOHN: All right, that's a good question. I would suggest that there is no particular order, but that you alternate a short book with a long book. Like when you finish John, you can go back and read Philippians. When you finish Philippians, you could go back and read Romans. When you finish Romans, which is 16 chapters, go back and read 1 Timothy, which is 6 chapters. Then go back and read Mark which is 16. Then go back and read Colossians. You know? Alternate between a large book and a small book at your own discretion. And you may find the Holy Spirit drawing you to different books because there are different needs in your life at any given time. Okay?

QUESTIONER: You said the necessity to study, like a babe that would die if he didn't get fed. What do you mean by death? Would you clarify that?

JOHN: I simply said that a baby who doesn't eat dies. And a Christian who doesn't feed himself on the Word of God will find that in a metaphorical sense, he will die in the sense of usefulness; he will die in the sense of joy; he will die in the sense of blessedness. Obviously, he will not forfeit his salvation. That's another subject that we could cover, but we've covered it in other areas. Okay?

QUESTIONER: If a person professes to have accepted Christ, but shows no hunger for the Word, can we conclude anything about their salvation? And then also, is there anything we can do to make a person like this more hungry for the Word?

JOHN: I think that's a very important question, and it relates to two scriptural

passages. The first one is in [John 8:31](#). Some Jews came to Jesus and said, “We believe.”

And Jesus said to them, “If you continue in My Word, then you are My real disciples.”

One of the marks of a true Christian is a desire for the Word of God. Now, that desire may vary; there may be some new Christians who have a very minimal desire, and I think very often the fault of that can be in the church that they’re in, or in the Christian community that they’re in where there’s no emphasis on the Word, and they don’t really understand what that means.

It is true, I think, and Jesus point it out that if somebody does really believe, and their faith is really saving faith, and they’ve really come to Christ, they will continue in His Word. In other words, they will desire to know the Word. More than that, they will desire to obey the Word. But in certain cases, that will vary. Obviously, some have a greater tenacity for the Word than others. Now, it may be that, for some, that commitment comes along later. That real, total commitment comes along later. It may be that some are in an environment where there isn’t the peer pressure to get into the Word that there should be. And I think the only thing that we can do to encourage them is to do what we’re trying to do here, to point out the benefits and the blessings of doing this, and the consequences of not doing it. You become victimized.

So, continuing in the Word of God is definitely the mark of a Christian. And I am very suspect of someone who just has absolutely no interest in Scripture, because Jesus said, “If he’s a real disciple, he’ll continue in the Word.

QUESTIONER: Okay, part of it is along what she was asking about I was wondering, too, is that sometimes even though the desire is there to study is just in the area of discipline. Some people seem to – I mean maybe have been brought up a certain way that it’s very easy for them to discipline themselves to study, where other people really have a hard time with that, even though they want to, but it’s hard to be consistent.

JOHN: All right, I’ll answer that question two ways. One is, yes, it’s true that some people are more disciplined than others. Two, that’s no excuse because the Lord says we’re to study the Word.

You know, I’ve met some very undisciplined, scatter-brained people who study the Bible a lot. And I’ve met some other military types who don’t. So, I’m not sure you

always have to equate spiritual hunger for the Word with humanistic self-discipline.

Now, it may be easier for a very, very self-disciplined person to set a time and get into it. But the facts are maybe he doesn't get as much out of it as somebody who does it a little more scattered but has a greater intensity of heart. So, I really don't think you're dealing with an absolute in that sense. I think that when the Word of God tells us to study to show ourselves approved unto God, that's a general command to all of us. And that we can't say, "Well, I'm sorry, I've taken a psychological survey, and I'm undisciplined. So, that lets me off the hook."

And the second thing I would say, if God makes a command, he gives us the energy and the Holy Spirit to fulfill that if we're walking in the Spirit.

QUESTIONER: You mentioned under study about finding a godly person and a pattern in their life that you could follow. Could you explain a little bit more about what you mean about a pattern?

JOHN: Yes. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, conduct, and purity and everything." The greatest feature of leadership is example. And it is true that – and I see it so often, it is true that people mimic other people. We all do it. You know? I mean I know when I go to the South and spend two weeks in the South, I come out "talkin' like this." Have you ever noticed you do that? Or when I go to Mexico, and I'm there for two weeks, and I come home, and everybody I see I say, "Buenos dias." You know? And – because you are an imitator.

And the apostle Paul picked this up. And everywhere he went, he said, "Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ. We imitate. And it's not enough to have somebody like Christ as a pattern, because He's God. We need somebody who's human to follow. That's why Paul always went around saying, "Follow me, follow me, because I'm following Christ." You need some – some flesh that you can see the pattern of life. And it's very important that you find that kind of pattern. And that's why I say it's dangerous for Christians to just flit around and never have any godly people to whom they submit themselves so that they can watch the pattern of their lives. Does that answer it?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: John, about that people follower's thing, pretty soon a person's going to find out that that person they're following is human and they have sin in their life. It just seems to me that you ought to say something about that.

JOHN: Okay, and that's obvious that we all have sin in our life. The first thing that the guy should do is admit it like Paul who said, "I'm the chief of sinners."

QUESTIONER: Mm-hmm.

JOHN: So, let's get that straight at the beginning. Let's not wait till you find that out. But the second thing is it isn't so much the absence of sin that makes the example; it's how it's dealt with. See? It's not - you're not following the guy because he's perfect. You're following him because he knows how to handle his imperfection.

QUESTIONER: Well, I understand that, but I think, though, that there's a real danger in that, just becoming a person follower.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: And, "I'm like so-and-so, therefore I'm godly." You know what I mean?

JOHN: Yeah. Well, sure. And you'll find that in every good thing like that, Satan will want to push you to the limits, you know, so that you become a little rubber duck who quacks the same way everybody else quacks. But that isn't the point. Right? I understand what you're hitting at. We follow the person as long as following them is the equivalent of following Christ. And we have to keep that perspective.

It's as if you were following a - a transparent man through whom you could see Christ. When you stop seeing Christ, and the man ceases to be transparent, then he ceases to be what he should be to you.

QUESTIONER: I [crosstalk]

JOHN: I think it's the example - I think it's the man who's leading you - it's his responsibility to make sure he's transparent so that you see Christ. As soon as he becomes like Diotrefes, whom we'll study Sunday night, who loves to have the preeminence - interesting thing about that is, the concept of preeminence is only used one other time in the Scripture, and it's in relation to Christ. So, here was a man who was a leader in the church, who was usurping the place of Christ, and he

wanted the preeminence. When a man does that, then he ceases to be transparent. You can't see Christ anymore, and he ceases to be functioning as a true example.

But as long as the person continually points to the preeminence of Christ and keeps the focus there, I think that there's a validity in it.

QUESTIONER: Okay. I'd like you also to hit on basically what you're trying to do with the reading the Bible – reading 1 John for 30 days. You're trying to build a habit in our life of getting God's Word into us. And could you say a little bit about habits and how to build them?

JOHN: Good. Yeah. You know, habits are just doing things repetitiously. And that's exactly what it does. If you can ever get the habit begun, we are creatures of habit. You know, we basically do the same things all the time. We put on whichever pant leg goes on first always goes on first by the time you get to be 40 years old. And whichever sock goes on first, that's all – you know? – you're just creatures of habit. You have the same kind of routines that – the youngest of you don't at this point. You'll find out when you get old like us that everything – you know, if – “What's happened to my thing? Why is it over there? It's not here.” You know? And you get into these little deals.

But – and you can see this creeping up. So, we're creatures of habit. And the best thing to do is to start habits when you're young. Routine really helps.

And you can say, “Well, I just flow in the Spirit, man. I just kind of go and blow wherever.”

Well, you know, you can even trace habits in the life of Christ. You know, He spent most of the nights in communion with the Father. That was His time. He retreated to the Mount of Olives night after night after night after night after night in prayer with the Father. And that was His time when He was here on earth. And I think habits are very important. I don't think that the habit performed ritualistically or legalistically is a substitute for what really should be going on. But I think if you can get into a pattern, it helps.

QUESTIONER: Okay, just one more thing. Are you saying that this reading of Scripture and then studying the Scripture on your own for yourself is something apart from any sort of ministry you're doing? Is it something that you do yourself apart from studying for Sunday service?

JOHN: Not necessarily. I feel that if I've studied the Word of God, I've studied the

Word of God. If I go into the study at 9:00 in the morning and have prayer for a while, and then I study till 5:00 in the afternoon and go home, I don't say, "Oh, I'm defeated today; I didn't have my devotions." Not if I've spent six or seven hours studying the Bible. I – you know, people talk about having your devotions. I'm not sure what that means even, having your devotions. If it means reading without understanding, I'm not sure it's even valid. If it means going through a little formula or reading something like Our Daily Bread, that's fine. It's a little bit of input. But when you've spent time in the intensity of the study of the Word of God, that's what you're after. I don't think we need to label little segments and say, "Well, if you didn't do it in this context and read this kind of a thing with this thing in mind, it doesn't count."

QUESTIONER: But just for the ordinary Christian, because you're a little different, studying every single day, would you say that – suppose they were involved in a weekly biblical study, which they did a little study during the week for that, would you say that it would be important for them to do this reading of Scripture daily?

JOHN: Yeah, I think that you should set the pattern anyway, and then if you did additional things, they would be done additionally. Don't break your pattern on a normal basis. But I don't think that's a crucial thing. I think maybe there is a day when you will break your pattern because you have to work on your lesson. That's fine. I don't see a problem with that.

QUESTIONER: I'd like to ask you maybe if you could explain the details of what you did this week in order to study for I Corinthians, and also what you would recommend for a new Christian, how he should study the Scripture, how it would differ from the way you would study for a particular passage?

JOHN: Well, it probably would differ. The way I study is to take the – first of all, I would read the text in several versions, along with the Greek text handy there, until I understand it. Like I was working on [I Corinthians 4:14](#) to 21 this week. And so, I read it and read it and read it and read it and read it and just kept reading it. I just – again, repetitiously until [I Corinthians 14:21](#) is so much in my mind I could probably stand here and quote you the whole passage, and I haven't even tried to memorize it, but I'm saturating my mind with it. Now when I – when I do that, and do that and do that, then it begins to – begins to mean something to me. Then in the middle of that I see concepts. I see in that passage Paul making a very, very clear statement about he's the spiritual father of the Corinthians, and that that means this and this and this and this and this, and an outline develops.

Now, once that develops, I put that on paper. Then I go verse by verse through the passage, and I get commentaries, and I line up about 10 or 11 commentaries and I read everything everybody's ever written on that passage because I want to know the whole breadth of information about that verse. And so, I may read 12 commentaries on every verse in that whole section. And I take all kinds of notes on that, and then I throw all that together and out comes Sunday morning – good, bad, or indifferent.

But I feel, as I said earlier, that the way to study is, first of all, to go through the Scripture and get all you can get on the Scripture, and then supplement that scriptural understanding with any books that you have available.

And as I said, you can study a book, going through it to get the understanding of it; or you can study a topic like prayer, or judgment, or any of those things we mentioned. You can study a character, a biography, anything you want. And you can do it by just reading the verses, putting them together on a paper, and working through. You may want to study a chapter, and you might want to say, "What's the key thought of the chapter?" Write that down. "What are the other thoughts that build to the key thought?" Write all of those down. "What don't I understand?" Write that down. "What do I understand?" Write that down. "What are other subjects introduced in the chapter that I could also study?" Write all of those down. And you'll find that out of a chapter will come so much stuff you won't believe it. It's just – it's loaded with things. So, there are a lot of ways to approach it. Does that cover –

QUESTIONER: John, do you do like your word studies and your grammatical studies right out of the commentaries, or do you do it in some other way?

JOHN: That's really hard for me to answer personally, because I do it so many different ways. I sometimes – like today, I got this concept that came cross where there was a man named Gaius. I was working on 3 John. There's a man named Gaius, and Gaius is commended as a man who not only knows the truth, but walks in the truth. And I thought, "Now, that's an interesting commendation for a man." And I thought – I got to thinking about the idea of commending. So, I just took my – my Bible, and I started in the Pauline epistles with the first one – Romans – and I found every time that Paul ever commended anybody. And I went through every one of those passages. And he starts out in 16:1; he commends Phebe for being a servant and a fellow helper. And then down, down, and Mary and Urbanus and all this. I just went through every single book, and I put down everybody that was ever commended and why they were commended. So, that was one way to do the

study.

Other times – for example, I had that thesis on 3rd John, and I wanted to do some study into a Greek phrase. And so, I got out that particular thesis and studied through that to see what the Greek phrase meant. And I read B. F. Westcott in the Greek text and found out what he said it meant. And then I would do it from that angle.

Sometimes I'll do the study myself. I wanted to do a study on a particular word *hupolambanō*. So, I took out my own Greek text lexicon and what I call a – what is called The Englishman's Greek Concordance, and I did my own study on that. So, there's all different ways that you do it. But it gets kind of hairy with me, because I go all different directions, and there's no one way.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, John, what do you do when you just get up in the morning, and you go through a day, and you just don't feel like reading the Bible?

JOHN: Well, usually you don't read it. Right? Well, one of the things that I think is important is if you don't feel like reading the Bible, you have just recognized the truth that this is when you most need it. And if you can kind of get that into your mind, it may help.

Be aware of the fact that the times you don't want to read it are the times you most need it, and they're indications of the fact that maybe your approach to the Scripture isn't all that it ought to be.

You know, we are – let's face it, as rigid as we would like to set ourselves, we're sinners, and one of the ways we sin is in disobedience. And disobedience will take the form of a failure to do a lot of things, and that's one of them. And we all fall there, even myself. Practically, from my viewpoint, the toughest time for me is my vacation, because I tend not have that constant pattern of study. And I tend to skip two-three days at a time without studying the Scripture. And - and of course, for me that's like not eating, because I'm so used to doing it. And it has a devastating effect on me. So, I really struggle, too, with that. I think all Christians do because of our human weakness. But I think if you recognize that when you feel that way, that's when you need it most, maybe that's a help.

QUESTIONER: John, with your children, 12-13 years old, would you recommend the New Testament or other books?

JOHN: There are several good translations for children. There's one called The

Children's Living New Testament that is designed around an 850-word vocabulary. Very simple. And I use that with my children every day. They can understand everything in there. It is the New Testament, but I also think the Old Testament is great for kids, too. The Living Bible would be the best Old Testament to use. Is that what you were getting at?

And there's another book that I use with my kids that's just great. It called Leading Little Ones to God by somebody named Schoonhaven or Schoonover or something. It's all systematic theology for a child, basic doctrine. Like today, we were studying - we've been studying the doctrine of salvation in relationship to sin and mercy and all of that. And today we were going over the concept that God is good and God is forgiving. And it told the whole story of Joseph, how that even though his brothers were evil and his brothers threw him in a pit and sold him into Egypt, God was good enough to put Joseph in a position in Egypt to give them the grain they needed to stay alive when the famine came. How God was merciful through the very one that they had sold. And it turns out to be a perfect picture of Christ, the very individual the world killed was redeeming them at the very moment they were killing Him.

So, a book like that is helpful. And there are many good aides that you can use with children. And in fact, they become very helpful. You notice I remembered the story very well. I'm very susceptible to simplicity I want you to know.

QUESTIONER: John, if you know someone who's a new Christian, and they're in a - they're far away from you, and they can't attend a church in your area, how do you - what advice do you give them on choosing a church and what to look for?

JOHN: Well, you know, there are several things. We have some tapes like "The Marks of an Effective Church," or other tapes on the Church and what would be the marks of a church that you'd want to go to. That's one way. But to send them the principles so that they know what they're looking for. But really, the only thing you can do is maybe send them some books or some other tapes so that they become built up in the faith somewhere and can make a proper judgment of a church. This is a very practical problem.

Somebody comes to Christ in another area; they don't know where to go to church. So, they go to some church because somebody takes them there, and the church is all goofed up. And so, they find that they lose out. You know? They don't really grow; they don't mature. So, it's important to pick a good church. And I think that one way to do it is to send them books or tapes that will strengthen them and help

them to grow to a position where they can make a proper evaluation. And I know a lot of people in our church do that. I get asked every Sunday to recommend a church in some city. I don't always know. So, I say, "Well, send the person some tapes and some books so that they can begin to study some basic things about what the church should be." In fact, this book is a good book to do that; it's just a simple, biblical picture of the church.

And once they've made that evaluation, then they'll know how to judge a church. And then the only thing they can do is just follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONER: Do you think there's a danger in overemphasizing relying on helps and concordances and so that - cutting down on the time after you've read and really allowed the Holy Spirit to just speak to you individually and really let you know, you know, what the verse means? I know in my life, that was my first time I got a hold of some helps and commentaries. I'd just, you know, read the verse and hit the commentaries. And -

JOHN: Well, in answer to that, I would say this: you really cannot know what the Holy Spirit is saying to you until you know what the Holy Spirit is saying. Because He's not saying anything different to you than He's saying there. You know what I mean by that? It doesn't say, "Oh, isn't this wonderful? What this says to me is..." Well, I'm not interested in what it says to you. I'm interested in what it says.

You know, we've got a lot of people going around saying, "The Bible means this to me." Well, you know, if you interpret the Bible that way, everybody's got their own thing. So, you can't just say, "Well, I want to read it, and whatever God says to me, that's good." You know, half the time you're at least going to be out of context or misinterpret the Scripture, and you've missed the whole point. So, I would say that - study the Scripture, read the Scripture, study the commentary, and then sit down and meditate after you already know what it means and go at it that way. But don't miss the meditation. Because it says - and we read it already in the Psalms and in Joshua - "Meditate on these things day and night." We don't meditate in our day and age, and that's an important part of Bible study.

I was reading some interesting things recently about the fact - I think it was Marshall McLuhan was saying that we live in a world that is so oriented around something happening all the time and conversation going on or music that no one ever thinks. He said in the article, "The best way to avoid God is number one, never be alone, and number two, always have the music on." He even went so far as to say, "There's nothing to talk about anymore in our world."

There's nothing to say. The media has said everything. There aren't any opinions that haven't been expressed a zillion times. There aren't any conversations that haven't been held. So, everybody sits around like a blank and stares at a box. There isn't anything to talk about. We have a whole world of media that Satan has used to so dominate our thinking - you see people going around with little things in their ear. They get in the car - bing - they'll turn on the deal. Get home, turn on the tube. Turn on the radio. It's got to be noise going on. See? The whole idea of meditation.

Then you have somebody coming in from the outside with his legs crossed and a silly suit on and his hair hanging down his back who says he's sitting in the corner and meditate. And that's the other extreme, where you sit there and think about nothing. But - and really, you know why that's popular today? It's popular as a social reaction to a world where your brain has been just bombarded, and people are sitting in a corner, trying to figure out who they are. But I think the Christian and the biblical approach is to meditate on the Word of God. Philippians 4 says, "Think on these things." You've got to sit there and think on these things. You've got to meditate on them. But you want to be sure your meditation is correct, that you're thinking on the proper thing. And you have to interpret it properly to do that.

And I'm not saying that just meditating on the Word is wrong, but if you're going to be thorough, then you ought to go at it that way.

QUESTIONER: Also, I had somebody not too - some time ago mention to me - a fairly new Christian - "Well, I haven't - I haven't read about that yet. I don't know about that particular kind" - you know? - in reference to - you know, a new Christian who's just got to the third chapter, and that particular subject isn't covered till the fifth chapter. And maybe that's used as a cop out I think, on people's part. Do you believe that that's not an excuse or that the Holy Spirit must really be ministering to that person and not allowing them - apart from their knowledge of Scripture, not allowing them to go into a sin or something like that?

JOHN: Yes. I do believe that. I believe that the Holy Spirit keeps us, and I believe that any sin at any point in your Christian life is a violation of what you know is right. I really - I do think, however, that there may be some things that aren't such moral things that we really just don't know about. For example, it may be some time that - I'll give you an illustration that a lawsuit would occur, and a Christian would sue another Christian simply because he didn't know what the Bible said about that. Well, there are some areas where there are - there are more of the

practical principles more than the ethical or moral things which I do believe we know. In fact, I believe even an unregenerate man knows those by conscience. But there may be some principles of behavior that God has laid down for the Christian.

For example, a Christian might not know to give what he has on the first day of the week unless somebody told him that. Because that – you know, he might – till he gets to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, he wouldn't really know that he was supposed to lay by in store the first day of the week as God has prospered him. He may feel he wants to give, but he wouldn't know the pattern.

Or unless somebody taught him about communion, he certainly wouldn't know to keep communion, because that's not a moral and ethical thing. That's a practice in the church. So, there are some things that, yes, a person would have to learn. But there are other things in the moral area that I believe God would teach through the Spirit.

A good illustration would be Romans 14 where he says, "There are some Jews who don't understand the liberty in Christ. So, wait till they grow up. Don't hassle them. If a man regards a day, let him regard it. If he wants to keep the Sabbath, it doesn't matter. He'll grow to the place where he understands his liberty." So, there's both side of it there.

QUESTIONER: While we're growing personally by repetitive reading, is it possible also to be teaching, say a family of small children, by reading aloud repetitively?

JOHN: It sure is.

QUESTIONER: I mean without a –

JOHN: Yes.

QUESTIONER: – without a previous –

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: - knowledge -

JOHN: I think if you wanted to do your reading thing with your family, that would be a great way to do it. Just read it together. And you'd all benefit from it. Sure.

Okay, I think at this time we'll – we'll stop session number one. That was good. I think it's profitable. And we covered some basic things I think will help some other

Christian - new Christians around the country on these tapes.

Original Link: <https://www.gty.org/sermons/1357/how-to-study-scripture?utm>